Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the first paragraph under the Background of the Invention on page 1 of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) is a cell-based transport and switching technology. ATM provides high-capacity transmission of voice, data, and video within telecommunications and computing environments. ATM is a transport technology that formats all information content carried by the network into 53-byte cells. Since these cells are short in length and standard in size, they can be switched through network elements known as ATM switches with a little delay, using what is referred to as an ATM switch fabric. Since various types of traffic can be carried on the same network, bandwidth utilization can be very high. These characteristics make the network very flexible and cost effective. An ATM switch fabric operates to direct ATM cells from one interface to another. In this way the ATM switch fabric operates in response to dynamically changeable virtual connection information contained within the cell. ATM cells may be encapsulated and transmitted over SONET data frames, for example using STS-1 or STS-Nc, which is a concatenation of N STS-1 signals, or over SDH data frames using STM-1 or STM-N. [[(]] STS-1 is a basic data stream in SONET, STM-1 is a basic data stream in SDH, wherein SONET (Synchronous Optical NETwork) and SDH (Synchronous Data Hierarchy) are synchronous hierarchies of

data transmission, preferably via optical communication networks [[)]] .

Please replace the last paragraph beginning on page 6 of the specification on page 6 and extending to page 7 of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

The switching device is preferably adapted to handle the incoming data streams having protocol(s) selected from the following non-exhaustive list comprising: ATM, IP, Ethernet, PDH (Plesiochronous Digital Hierarchy) (TDM), SDH (Synchronous Digital Hierarchy)/SONET(TDM), Frame relay, Optical signals such as ESCON, FICON, Fiber Channel.

Please replace the first full paragraph beginning on page 7 of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

Further, according to the preferred embodiment where the DB is a TDM (Time Division Multiplexing) cross-connect, the incoming data streams can be respectively enveloped into a SONET/SDH suitable for being handled in the distribution block DB. In a particular case, at least some of the I/O ports can be provided with means for formatting the incoming data streams into the SONET/SDH format.